

One thing I found out a long time ago, whatever the American Farm Bureau says I do not follow anymore because my farm bureau at home is autonomous and they do not support anything of the American Farm Bureau until their board approves it or they approve it at their convention. So regardless of what the American Farm Bureau might say, I wait until my Kentucky Farm Bureau endorses that.

But just the idea of representing all of the American Farm Bureau, the head of that organization writing letters on both sides, bouncing back and forth, no wonder we are confused when last year they were opposed to it. That helped it not come out of the committee, I am sure, over there. And then they were for it. And then they want us to be for something they were against at their instructions.

So I think the time for debate and consideration of this bill is more important than I have ever seen it since I have been here. There are radical, radical changes in this bill that in the years to come—and not too many short years—if the freedom to farm bill is passed, the American people will be up in arms when you decouple.

If you do not understand what decoupling is, that is separating the payments, or the income from the commodity from the deficiency payments or the payments to the farmer so the farmer will continue to get the payments every year for 7 years up to \$120,000 a year if you are in four different categories, which you can be and you can still raise your crop and still get big prices.

I think when you are doing that—and the farmers have always said they were against a welfare program, just absolutely, teetotally against a welfare program, and they are absolutely, teetotally for a balanced budget amendment, and to do something like that for them and for them to come up here and say this is something we want, I am not sure the leadership is speaking the grassroots attitude of the farmers, particularly of my State.

Now, you can come up here and say we want the money, we want you to pay us, but then decouple that to take away the safety net, take away the price stability of the marketplace, it is just something that is too radical to do immediately. Phased in, maybe. Phased out, maybe. But we need to think through this one. And I think 2 years from now, if we are paying farmers big prices and letting them get big prices for their product, somewhere the American taxpayer who is sending them the money when they are making big money, or making good profit on their crops, says that will not last very long. I think we ought to realize that and do it now and do it right rather than have to come back and be fussed at a year or two from now for doing something that the American taxpayers will not accept.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. CONRAD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. I will conclude. I know my colleague, the Senator from Iowa, is waiting patiently.

GETTING A GOOD FARM BILL

Mr. CONRAD. I conclude by saying I hope very much that we can finish the farm bill matter by Tuesday of next week. I would have hoped we could have gotten it done today. It was not possible. But it is better to wait a few days and get it right than pass a farm bill that greased the skids from under farm producers and eliminate a program for the future.

That is precisely what this Chamber was faced with today, a plan to eliminate a farm program over time, a plan that would have guaranteed the elimination of farm programs because I believe there would have been a scandal when people discovered farmers were getting large Government payments even when they were having high income as a result of high prices that we are experiencing currently. The key is to have protection for farmers in low price years. That is when they need protection.

I think it is critically important we reach an agreement that provides a safety net in low price years and that also recognizes many farmers are hard-pressed by cash-flow this year because of the requirement to pay back advance deficiencies from last year.

I am hopeful we can achieve an agreement between the two sides that bridges those differences and achieves a settlement that is fair for American farmers, fair for the American taxpayers and that achieves a result that ensures we can pass farm legislation for the future.

I likened earlier today the proposal we had to the Reverend Jim Jones when he handed out the Kool-Aid that was laced with poison. It tasted good going down. When people drank it, they were dead.

Mr. President, there is no reason for us to take that kind of action. It is worth it to take a few extra days to get it right.

I thank the Chair. I thank my colleague from the State of Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

PASSAGE OF A FARM BILL

Mr. GRASSLEY. In the last hour and 15 minutes I believe, both before the floor leaders talked and since, we have heard people on both sides of the aisle speak about not having a farm bill, why we do not have a farm bill, even who is to blame for not having a farm bill. The fact is we do not have one, and it looks as if we are not going to have one.

We heard earlier during debate how awful it was—we heard this from the other side—that we were not going to be able to pass a farm bill. You have heard many times this evening that the President vetoed a farm bill, a 7-year farm bill in December. The President vetoed it after it passed Congress.

You heard this side of the aisle blamed because we have not passed a farm bill when this afternoon we had 53 votes for the Freedom to Farm Act. A majority of this body supported the Freedom to Farm Act.

Now, it is one thing to say it is too bad we do not have one, we ought to have one, we ought to stay here and work to get one, but it seems to me it takes a lot of gall from the other side of the aisle to blame this side of the aisle that we do not have a farm bill when we either did pass one and the President vetoed it or we demonstrated today that we had the votes to pass another one.

It just does not add up. It just does not make sense. I do not think the American people are going to buy that argument. They can add. They know what a majority vote is. They know what it means when a President vetoes a bill. They know what it means when the President threatened this week to veto a bill that came out of the House Agriculture Committee by a bipartisan vote, the substance of which was the backbone for the legislation that we had 53 votes for here today. The President did not even wait until it got to his desk, a bipartisan bill. The President threatened to veto it.

It happens that there was a Lugar-Leahy alternative that could have been before this body. What is the Lugar-Leahy bill? It is the freedom to farm bill with a list of about 10 things that the Democrats wanted us to include in the bill, that we included. It was their language, their points. We included them. We never even got to a vote on that today. The President had already sent a letter up here—it has been put in the RECORD by the floor leader—that he was threatening to veto that. And we are being admonished by the other side of the aisle that we should have a bipartisan bill because we have always had farm bills developed in a bipartisan manner?

The Lugar-Leahy bill had added to it just exactly what the other side of the aisle wanted. Well, there may be people on the other side of the aisle who do not like what was in Lugar-Leahy, but they cannot say it was not bipartisan. It seems to me they cannot blame this side of the aisle because we do not have a farm bill, and particularly when the President said he was going to veto it before we ever got to it.

Then we are told that what was bad about the freedom to farm bill that was in the Balanced Budget Act was that it was going to cut \$13 billion, three or four times what the President wanted cut, from farm programs in an attempt to balance the budget. But the bill that got 53 votes today only cut \$4 billion,

and that \$4 billion is exactly equal to what the President had been suggesting all last year what should come from programs in an effort to balance the budget.

Mr. President, I think the debate today is bigger than the debate about just the farm bill. The debate today is what the last election was all about, whether or not we are going to continue to do business as usual or whether or not there is going to be some changes. The people in the last election sent a message—no longer business as usual.

It seems to me, as far as agriculture is concerned, no longer business as usual is that we do not continue to rely on 1949 legislation as backup legislation. The 1949 act was written for agriculture of the 1940's and 1950's, when all we were concerned about was domestic consumption and production to meet that domestic demand. It was all based upon allotments, a great deal of Government regulation, and a great deal of decisionmaking, even more than under the 1990 farm bill, here in Washington, DC. That is not the farm environment, the agricultural economic environment of the 1990's, and it surely is not for the next century. The 1990 farm bill is not even a Government program for the next century.

So what we tried to develop this year was a farm program that would bring us around to a point where we could meet the demands for agriculture in the next century and the realities of the world trading environment. That is what freedom to farm is all about, to provide transition payments that are certain payments that will get us from 1996 until the year 2002, with farmers being able to make decisions on what to plant and what to market based upon the marketplace and not on the decisions of faceless bureaucrats in Washington, and, lastly, not to set aside our productive capacity, but to produce for the demands of the world marketplace and to tell our world competition that we are going to do it and compete with every market we can and meet that world competition.

That is what the legislation that we got 53 votes today for is intended to do. But "business as usual" are people, as the vote went today, mostly on the other side of the aisle, as I can see it, who want to maintain Government involvement in the decisionmaking for the farmer, to have the possibility of not producing to capacity to meet the world marketplace, the demands of the hungry around the world, and to make sure that we have a roller coaster of Government support for agriculture—high payments when prices are moderate and no payments when prices are higher.

What is wrong with that, Mr. President, is, as we transition into an agriculture environment that meets world competition and trade, there is not any certainty in that as there is in the freedom to farm bill.

There are some farm organizations, Mr. President, who actually believe

that the Government ought to have their fingers into every aspect of agriculture. I believe they will not be satisfied until there is as much regimentation of American agriculture as there is of European agriculture by the European governments.

Business as usual on the farm debate is a desire to maintain the fingers of Government into agriculture to the greatest extent possible. It is all right to do that if that is what you believe. But it is not, it seems to me, right in the process to blame Republicans when you cannot have a farm bill when the President of the other party vetoed it and we had 53 votes on a bipartisan bill to pass it this year or a bipartisan vote to get it out of the House Agriculture Committee earlier this week.

It seems to me it is OK to have that philosophy of maintaining Government's fingers in agriculture, but you should not be blaming us for not passing a farm program. What the major farm organizations of America want, it seems to me, is that we have to have a farm program that meets this new economic environment. That is what freedom to farm is all about.

It seems we heard debate today, again from the other side of the aisle, about sometimes not enough money being in agriculture because the Balanced Budget Act of 1995 would have taken \$13 billion out of the baseline.

Then the next time, we are being admonished that we have a program that is going to let farmers receive some payments when prices are high. We present a farm bill that has \$6 billion for the year we are in when the program that we accepted from the other side of the aisle would not have any payments this year in the sense that it would be done away with as a result of farmers paying back last year's deficiency payment.

With the certainty of \$43 billion over the next 7 years, we have a chance in those parts of rural America where they did not have a good crop last year to benefit from the higher prices of grain this year, but yet they would be caught with writing a check back to the Federal Government for the advance deficiency payment that they got last year.

Our program would solve that. It would have a \$6 billion investment in agriculture, it seems to me just exactly what we are hearing the other side of the aisle cry about that our farm program was taking \$13 billion out of the baseline.

I hope that we can reach an agreement. The way things developed today, when you have a situation where the Democratic and Republican leaders get together and we on this side of the aisle buy everything that the Democratic leader asked for, and it looks like we have a bipartisan agreement put together, and then the other side cannot even go with a sweetheart deal that we accept—as I said once before on the Lugar-Leahy bill, there were 10 or 12 items that they put on a sheet of

paper that they wanted, and we just accepted them. Yet, in the caucus for the other side, they cannot agree to move forward tonight. And when they come out of that caucus, then they come to the floor and blame us when we had 53 votes, a majority vote to pass a bill, they blame us?

That is what I mean when I say I think it takes a lot of gall when we take almost everything they want, I guess, in these two instances, everything they ask for, and then eventually we cannot move forward.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

CONSTRUCTING A COMPROMISE FARM PROGRAM

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, Ogden Nash wrote a little four line poem about a man who was a drunk and a spouse of his who nagged him about it all the time. I am reminded of that listening to what I have listened to in the last hour or so.

He drinks because she scolds, he thinks.

She scolds because he drinks, she thinks.

And neither will admit what is really true.

He's a drunk and she's a shrew.

I listened today to discussions about who is at fault for failure. I listened to creative inventive discussions in which any one of several people choose to say that "It's her fault," or "his fault" or "their fault."

It is of little use or value, it seems to me, to worry about anything other than how we construct a compromise farm program.

There is a wide range of agreement in this Chamber about a farm program. There ought to be total planting flexibility for farmers. Any new farm program should provide for total planting flexibility on base acres. There is wide agreement on that.

Most of us agree that there ought to be forgiveness of advance deficiency payments for those who suffered crop losses last year. Most of us would agree to some kind of advance deficiency payment that would not have to be repayable in the next year or two. I would have no objection to that.

I would not be pleased with providing payments for people who do not farm. If the requirement for getting a payment is simply to have some land and a bank account, but you do not have to plant a seed and you still get a generous payment, that is wrong. I have some trouble with that. But I have no problem at all with providing some kind of advance or certain payments for farmers in order to recapitalize their farm operation.

My hope had been this evening that we would proceed during this period to have constructed some kind of a compromise. The reason that we are not proceeding late tonight or tomorrow or Saturday or Sunday or Monday I assume has a lot to do with what a lot of people are doing around the country.